The Role of the Cooperating Teacher

The cooperating teacher is a crucial contributor to the student teacher’s growth and development as a beginning teacher. Cooperating teachers model good teaching; provide guidance; and assure that the student teacher receives extensive experience in planning, instruction, teaching, assessment, communicating with colleagues, administrators and parents, and so on. They provide regular, targeted feedback; and help assess whether the student teacher should be recommended for licensure.

Who Becomes a Cooperating Teacher?
The Graduate School of Education’s Field Placement Coordinator, in cooperation with school districts and cohort leaders, arranges placements for student teaching candidates. Candidates’ preferences about grade level and geographic location are considered when making placements. Oregon requires (OAR 584-17-0070) that cooperating teachers “have had two years’ experience in early childhood, or elementary, or middle or high school immediately prior to supervision and/or instruction and who hold a valid license for current assignments.”

Expectations for Cooperating Teachers
The relationship between the cooperating teacher and the student teachers is a complex one that takes different forms depending on the individuals, students, and schools involved. However, we hope that every cooperating teacher will:

• Make student teachers feel welcome through introductions to students and colleagues, providing a desk or other personal space, providing information about procedures and policies, and learning about the school’s culture.
• Provide student teachers with varied opportunities to work with students as early as possible, beginning with routine activities, and work with individuals and small groups, and gradually increasing their responsibilities.
• Provide opportunities for student teachers to carry out activities (lessons, interviews, student shadows, etc.) required for their PSU classes and for personal growth.
• Plan regular times to meet with student teachers for planning and feedback.
• Be available to meet with the students’ university supervisors for scheduled conferences and occasional informal conversations.
• Guide student teachers in planning, teaching and assessing the work sample. They document their agreement of the university supervisor’s assessment of the work sample with their signature on the Work Sample Evaluation form.
• Complete student teaching evaluation forms prior to 3-way evaluative conference.
• Write a letter of recommendation for students’ placement files.
• Communicate any concerns to the university supervisor, cohort leader or both.
• Complete Disposition concerns forms if necessary.
Curriculum, Planning and the Work Sample
Although student teachers are expected to follow the teacher’s, school’s and district’s curriculum plan, the GTEP cohort leaders expect that student teachers must have the opportunity to do original planning. Curriculum planning is an important part of becoming a teacher and is essential for the development of the work sample. Each work sample is meant to demonstrate the student teacher’s ability to plan, instruct, assess, and reflect on a unit of study. Cooperating teachers need to provide some flexibility in the topic and content of the curriculum that student teachers are responsible for developing. For example, the cooperating teacher might feel that students need a lesson on some aspect of punctuation and allow the student teacher latitude in how to achieve this goal. The work sample in particular is often an opportunity for student teachers to work in depth on a topic of interest and expertise.

Reduced Enrollment Fee Privilege
In partial compensation for their work, cooperating teachers may take advantage of the Reduced Enrollment Fee Privilege for classes at institutions in the Oregon University System (e.g. Portland State University). School districts have developed their own policies to distribute the reduced enrollment privilege. Districts are encouraged to make these privileges available to the cooperating teachers who supervised student teachers. Additional information about compensation will be given to the cooperating teacher after the placement is made.